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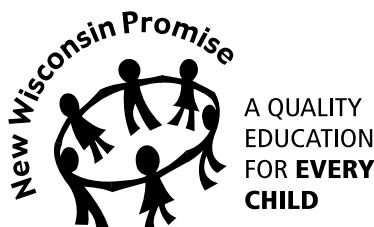


State Superintendent's **High School Task Force**



State Superintendent's High School Task Force Report

October 2006



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

Madison, Wisconsin, USA

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October 2006

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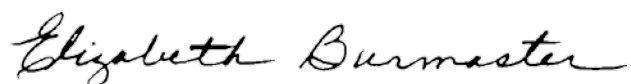
Foreword

Wisconsin has one of the finest PK-12 education systems in the nation. Our high schools have a rich history of providing excellent education and well documented evidence of high performance by our students. Wisconsin exceeds the national benchmarks for graduation, and our students are top performers on standardized tests and entrance exams. Still, we know we must do better. Through our New Wisconsin Promise, we are working to ensure a quality education for every child and close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and their peers.

The demands and challenges that our high schools face have never been greater. We must find ways to connect with every student and ensure they leave high school with the academic preparation and strong foundation needed to be successful in the 21st century in postsecondary education, the workplace, and citizenship. The economic stability and social and personal well-being of Wisconsin's citizens will be determined by how we educate this generation. There are no quick fixes or simple solutions to high achievement and academic success for all our students. I welcome the Task Force recommendations as a call for change and the action that is needed.

We are indebted to those who served on the High School Task Force. They were dedicated to listening to students, parents, business people, educators, and the citizens of Wisconsin. Members of the Task Force were diligent in their review of performance measures, literature, and research. They examined redesign models, current innovations, and effective practices. We owe them a high degree of gratitude and thanks.

Our high schools are actively pursuing innovation and working to meet the diverse educational needs of our students. Let us embrace the changes needed and continue our pursuit of excellence. All our students deserve a high quality education and preparation for success.



Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent



Letter to State Superintendent

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
**State Superintendent's
HIGH SCHOOL TASK FORCE**

August 7, 2006

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
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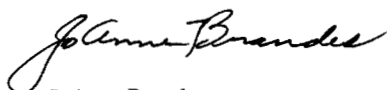
Dear Superintendent Burmaster:

The High School Task Force you appointed and charged to provide direction for improvement for Wisconsin High Schools has completed its work. Thank you for your commitment to improving the quality of education for our students in Wisconsin's High Schools. Representation on the Task Force included individuals from all sectors of the education community, business, and government. It was evident that this broad-based Task Force participation confirmed your commitment to maintaining Wisconsin as a national leader in the quality of high school education. The Task Force examined research, best practices for student learning, and organizational structures that builds our capacity to serve our students better now and far into the twenty-first century.

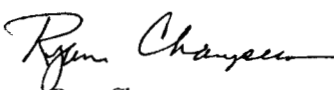
The recommendations represent our collective study, data gathering, and consensus on the critical factors influencing improving high school education in our state. These recommendations are intended as a guide for every school district and individual high school in our state, for the purpose of increasing our capacity to assure our students' success. Some of these recommendations are already being widely practiced in Wisconsin high schools, others will require a brave step forward to change the traditional order of high school education in order to assure success for ALL students.

On behalf of the members of the High School Task Force, thank you for providing the leadership and vision that moves Wisconsin forward and makes our state among the best in education in the nation.

Sincerely,



JoAnne Brandes
Co-Chair, High School Task Force
Executive Vice President, CAO and General Counsel
JohnsonDiversey, Inc.



Ryan Champeau
Co-Chair, High School Task Force
Principal
Waukesha North High School

JB:RC:mew

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to the members of the High School Task Force for their invaluable contribution to the completion of this report and for their commitment and expertise throughout the year.

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Thanks to staff members at the Department of Public Instruction who have contributed their time and talents generously: Ron Anderson, Meri Annin, Anita Castro, Nic Dibble, Gerhard Fischer, Sue Grady, Jane Grinde, Tom Grogan, Jane Heibel, Trish Hibbard, John Johnson, Nancy Mueller, Judy Peppard, Beth Ratway, Denise Roseland, Paul Sandrock, Peggy Solberg, Carol Stricker, Dan Wilttrout, and Mary Weber.

Thanks also to Peggy Klekotka, Donna Bronson, and Learning Point Associates for their expertise and support.

Special thanks to those who participated in the listening sessions held throughout the state and to the students who expressed their concerns and shared their recommendations.

Table of Contents

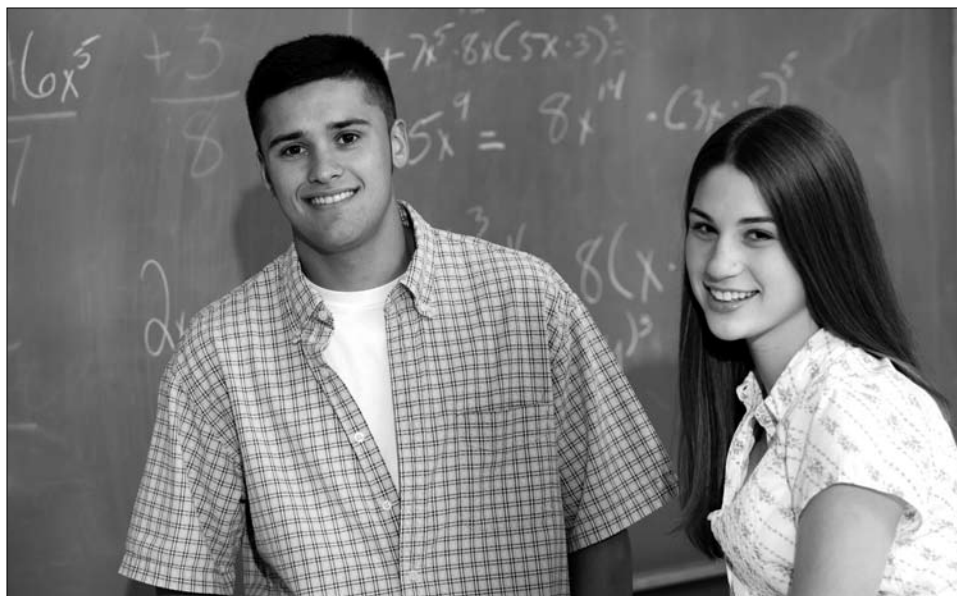
Introduction	1
Mission	2
Background.....	3
Performance Measures	5
Proceedings and Work of the Task Force	11
Recommendations	19
Conclusion.....	23
Appendices:	
Appendix A – Recommended Reading	25
Appendix B – Speaker Presentation Narratives.....	33
Endnotes	43

Introduction

State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster convened a statewide High School Task Force in February 2005 to ensure that Wisconsin high school students continue to graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education, the high-skills workplace, and as citizens of our global economy. Seventy education advocates and leaders—including students, parents, teachers, and high school principals, along with business and community representatives from across the state—were appointed to the Task Force. The efforts were co-chaired by JoAnne Brandes, Executive Vice President, Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel for JohnsonDiversey, Inc., and Ryan Champeau, Principal of Waukesha North High School. The Task Force was charged with looking at national models and various local initiatives aimed at redesigning the high school experience, enhancing student learning and engagement, and strengthening the alignment of high school with postsecondary education and workforce needs.

Throughout the nation, as in Wisconsin, states are undertaking efforts to examine the role and ability of high schools to prepare students for post-high school success. The issue of high school reform is on the national agenda, and calls for reorganizing high schools are intensifying. Consensus is growing that high schools need to be more rigorous. There is an emerging vision about the skills and abilities needed by all students, whether they are preparing for higher education or the workplace. Educators, policymakers, and employers are voicing concerns that all students need a common core of high-level skills, and are working toward defining just what skills are needed, what rigor means, and how “rigor” is measured. A number of reports and recommendations have emerged on the national scene that call for “high school reform” or “redesign.” The work of the Task Force was guided both by an examination of effective and innovative practices currently being used in Wisconsin as well as work on the national level.

The Task Force was charged with looking at national models and various local initiatives aimed at redesigning the high school experience, enhancing student learning and engagement, and strengthening the alignment of high school with postsecondary education and workforce needs.



The High School Task Force Mission

The demands on high schools and the expectations of high school graduates have never been greater. As we prepare students for the 21st century and a knowledge-based economy, we must ensure our high school graduates leave school with a strong foundation for success. While we celebrate the present success and achievement of PK-12 students in Wisconsin, we must continually look to the future.

The High School Task Force was convened to ensure our high school students are graduating with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education, the workplace, and as citizens of our 21st century global society.

There are various local initiatives underway aimed at redesigning or transforming the high school experience, enhancing student learning and engagement, and strengthening the alignment with postsecondary education and workforce needs. The Task Force focused on statewide leadership to ensure quality education in our high schools.

An inclusive stakeholder group was convened to:

- Identify strategies to raise achievement, close the gap, and promote postsecondary success and good citizenship for all students;
- Embrace the strengths of our high schools and identify where change is needed;
- Examine new models of student learning and engagement;
- Rethink the roles and relationships that define high schools; and
- Advance best practices that promote equity, quality, and accountability in the high school experience.

As we prepare students for the 21st century and a knowledge-based economy, we must ensure our high school graduates leave school with a strong foundation for success



Background

The efforts of the Task Force are part of a broader initiative to close Wisconsin's achievement gap, a commitment made by State Superintendent Burmaster in her *New Wisconsin Promise*.

Our New Wisconsin Promise

Our common ground is our New Wisconsin Promise—our commitment to ensure a quality education for every child. Raising achievement for all students and closing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and their peers is our No. 1 priority.

A quality education system is the foundation of a strong democracy and healthy economy.

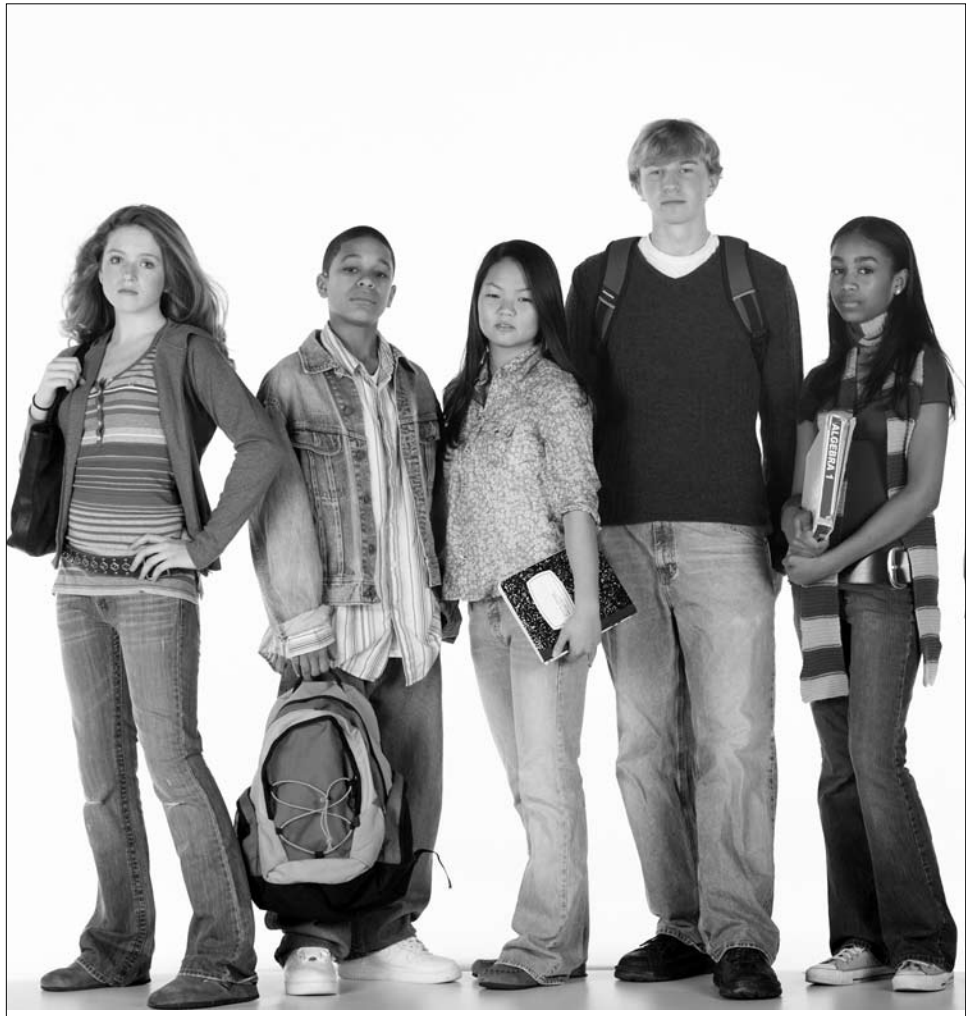
Our New Wisconsin Promise is committed to ensuring that every child graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the 21st century global society by:

- Ensuring quality teachers in every classroom and strong leadership in every school.
- Improving student achievement with a focus on reading that has all students reading at or above grade level.
- Investing in early learning opportunities through the four-year-old kindergarten, Preschool to Grade 5, and SAGE class-size reduction programs.
- Sharing responsibility by increasing parental and community involvement in our schools and libraries to address teenage literacy, drop-outs, and truancy.
- Advancing career, technical, and arts education to engage students in becoming active citizens by understanding their role in the family, society, and the world of work.
- Providing effective pupil services, special education, and prevention programs to support learning and development for all students while preventing and reducing barriers to student success.

The efforts of the Task Force are part of a broader initiative to close Wisconsin's achievement gap.

A number of current trends make this a particularly appropriate time for this initiative:

- We live in an increasingly competitive, truly global marketplace. Educational opportunity in Wisconsin not only impacts the state's quality of life, but it also will determine the ability of our state's residents and organizations to compete in those global markets.
- Technological revolutions continue to provide new tools as it also transforms methods and approaches to teaching and learning.
- There are limited public funds. What local, state or federal funds are available face serious demands from many competing high-priority causes.
- Some schools are doing better than others, and the effort to raise the performance of those schools that are trailing behind is an important priority to ensure that all students are successful.



Performance Measures

National Comparisons

Wisconsin's population ranks it as the nation's 18th largest state, but the performance of Wisconsin educational institutions ranks at the top of many key national indicators. From the establishment of our country's first kindergarten, to nation-leading performance on college admissions tests and high school graduation rates, to a truly world-class system of higher education and public libraries, Wisconsin has always prided itself on a commitment to high-quality educational institutions and publicly supported educational systems.

A. High School Graduation Requirements

Wisconsin's high school graduation requirements include a minimum of 13 credits: 4 credits of English, 3 of social studies, 2 of mathematics, 2 of science, 1.5 of physical education, and 0.5 of health education, with 8.5 credits of electives recommended. Districts are required to establish a local graduation policy beyond the state minimum that includes criteria related to academic achievement and teacher recommendation. The total number of credits required for graduation varies across school districts, with many districts requiring 24 credits. About 26 percent of the districts require more than two years of mathematics; 19 percent require more than two years of science; and 28 percent require more than three years of social studies.

B. ACT Scores and Participation

Wisconsin's composite ACT score, the predominant college admissions test used in the state, is 22.2, second highest in the nation, with 69 percent of the graduating class of 2006 having taken the ACT at least once prior to graduation. Wisconsin students continue to be among the nation's top performers on the ACT, with the average scores of the state's students in the class of 2006 higher than their peers nationwide in mathematics (22.0 vs. 20.8), reading (22.4 vs. 21.4), English (21.5 vs. 20.6), and science (22.2 vs. 20.9).¹

Students of color represented 10.9 percent of Wisconsin's 44,275 ACT test takers in the class of 2006, an increase from 10.2 percent the prior year. Generally, composite scores by racial/ethnic group were higher for Wisconsin students than for their peers nationwide, with the exception of African American and Asian students. Performance on the ACT, in Wisconsin and nationwide, tracks closely with whether students took the recommended college preparatory curriculum, also called the "ACT core curriculum," which consists of four years of English and three or more years of mathematics, science, and social studies.²

Wisconsin has always prided itself on a commitment to high-quality educational institutions and publicly supported educational systems.

The Achieve report from 2006 shows Wisconsin slightly behind the national average in the percentage of 11th- and 12th-graders taking AP exams.

C. Advanced Placement (AP) Scores and Participation

Data compiled by Achieve, Inc., regarding Advanced Placement coursework and examinations provides one means of comparing the rigor of high schools across states. The Achieve report from 2006 shows Wisconsin slightly behind the national average in the percentage of 11th- and 12th-graders taking AP exams (11 percent in Wisconsin compared to 12 percent nationwide).³ Demographic data shows substantial gaps in AP test participation across student subgroups, with 11 percent of both White and Asian students in the 11th and 12th grades taking AP exams in 2004 compared to 6 percent of Latinos and 3 percent of both African Americans and Native Americans.⁴ Between 1997 and 2004, the percentage of 11th- and 12th-graders taking AP exams in Wisconsin increased from 7 percent to 11 percent, with this increase of 4 percentage points matching the national increase (from 8 percent to 12 percent) that occurred nationwide.⁵

Discrepancies in AP participation in Wisconsin may well be related to access and opportunity, as approximately 25 percent of school districts in Wisconsin offer no AP courses.⁶ Wisconsin trend data regarding AP participation shows improvement, however. During the 2004-05 school year, 18,315 high school students took one or more AP exams, representing 6.4 percent of the state's total enrollment in grades 9-12. This represents improvement from 2003-04, when 17,043 students, representing 5.9 percent of enrollment in grades 9-12, took AP exams. The majority of AP exams taken by Wisconsin high school students are taken by White students, but both the number of exams taken by each of the four major non-White racial/ethnic groups (African American, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian), as well as the AP participation rates of all four groups, increased between 2003-04 and 2004-05.⁷

In July 2005, an additional \$100,000 in state funding became available annually to public high schools that do not currently offer AP classes. Also, the Department of Public Instruction recently won a competitive National Governors Association grant focused on increasing AP course offerings.

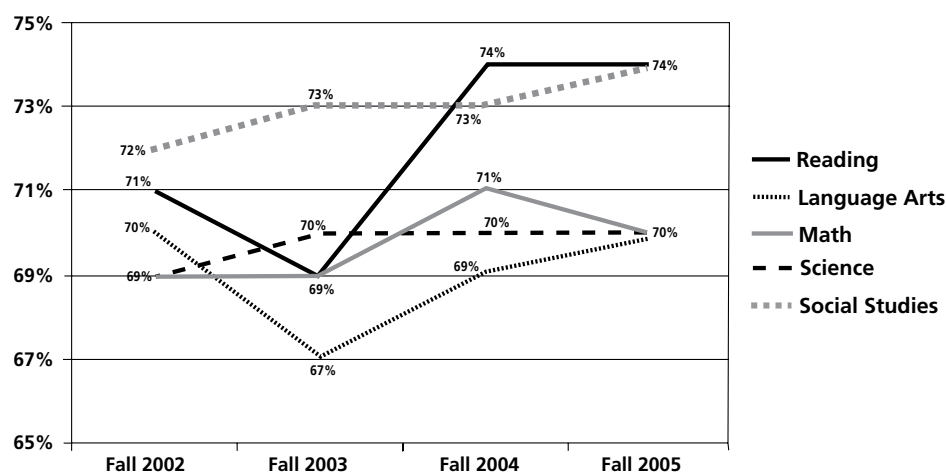
Wisconsin allows students the opportunity for dual enrollment under the Youth Options program, and students may earn credits toward high school completion by taking college-level coursework. With approval of the local school board, a student may take courses at a University of Wisconsin campus, an independent college or university campus, or one of the Wisconsin Technical Colleges. This practice is common in many states and provides students with increased rigor and expanded course offerings.

A reading of data from Achieve, Inc. shows that Wisconsin has relatively strong educational attainment levels. The data also points to areas that can benefit from focused attention. The demographic data underscores the nature and depth of the achievement gaps on key indicators of academic performance and readiness. Efforts to recognize and close this existing achievement gap have been the focus of concerted state-level efforts.

Wisconsin Assessment and Graduation Data

Assessment and graduation data for Wisconsin high school students provides an important comparison for viewing the performance of students and identifying areas for improvement. Statewide, the percentage of 10th-grade students scoring at or above proficient in reading on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) has remained fairly stable in recent years. On the Fall 2005 administration of the WKCE, the percentage of Wisconsin 10th-graders who scored Proficient or Advanced in the five subject areas tested (reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies), ranged from 74 percent in reading to 70 percent in language arts (Graph A). There has been little overall change at the state level for the four years (Fall 2002 through Fall 2005) in which data are comparable in terms of proficiency categories, and scale score data over the same time period shows stable performance as well.⁸

GRAPH A. Grade 10 WKCE: Percent Proficient and Advanced, All Tested Subjects and Students, Fall 2002 – Fall 2005

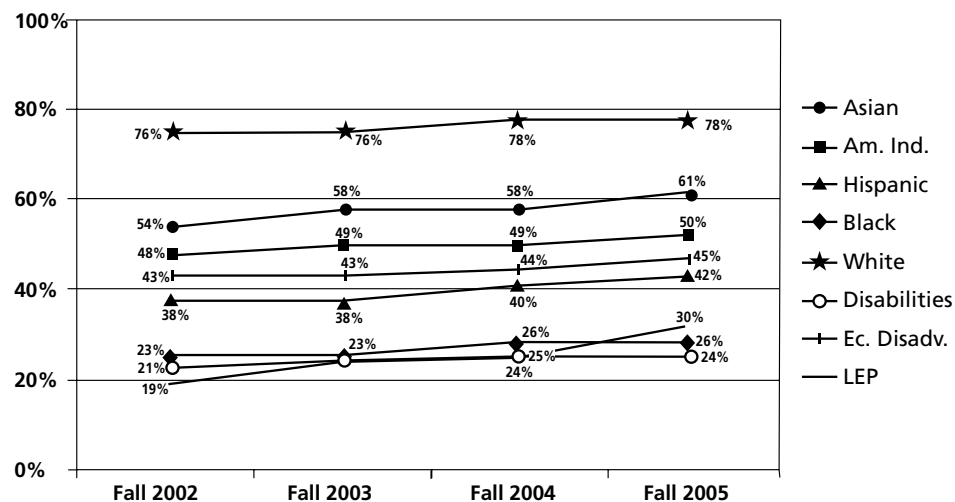


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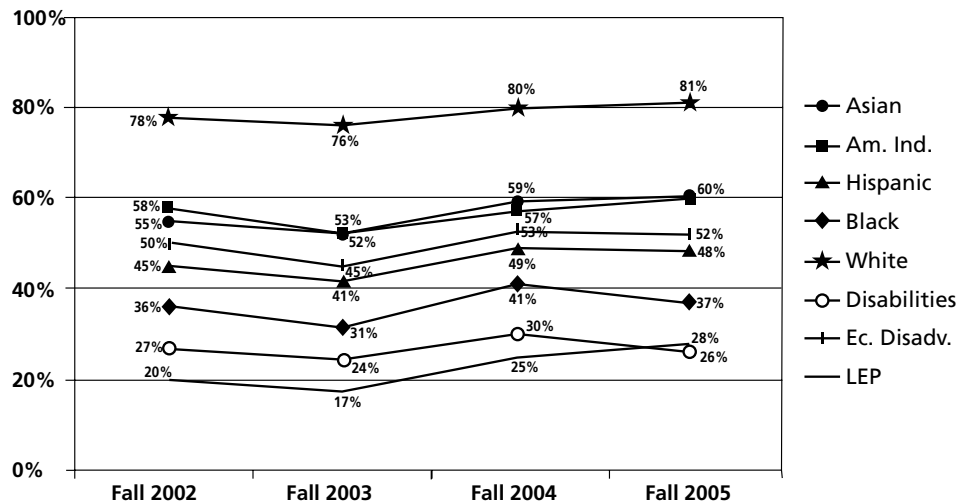
Several achievement gaps have narrowed over the four years examined, but much work remains to be done.

WKCE data reveals significant gaps in achievement among subgroups of Wisconsin 10th-grade students. In mathematics, reading, and all other tested subjects, White students scored substantially higher than non-White students, and large gaps also exist between poor and non-poor students, students with disabilities and non-disabled students, and English-proficient and limited-English proficient students. (Graphs B and C). The Black/White achievement gap for mathematics, for example, on the Fall 2005 WKCE at Grade 10 was 52 percentage points (78 percent of White students Proficient or Advanced compared to 26 percent of Black students). For reading, there was a gap of 44 percentage points between the number of White students scoring as Proficient or Advanced (81 percent) and the number of Black students who scored similarly (37 percent). Several achievement gaps have narrowed over the four years examined, but much work remains to be done.⁹

GRAPH B. Grade 10 WKCE Mathematics Percent Proficient and Advanced by Student Subgroup, Fall 2002 – Fall 2005

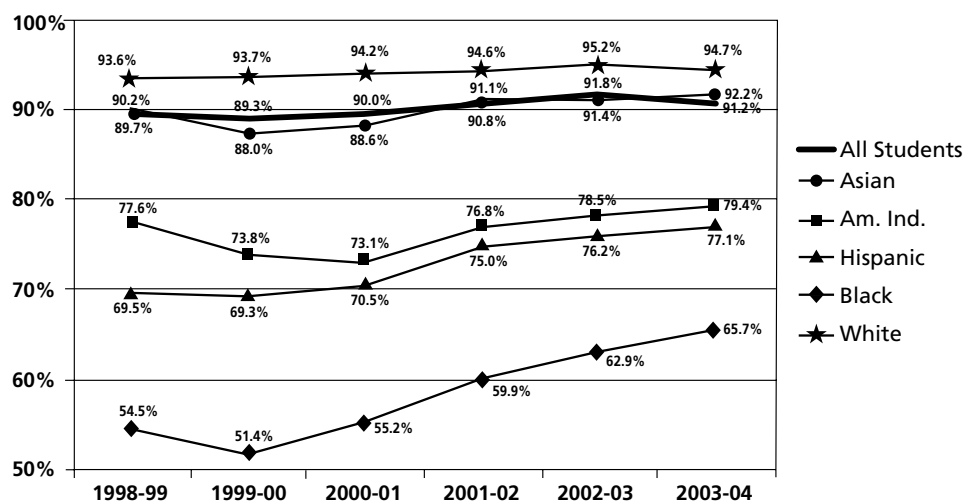


GRAPH C. Grade 10 WKCE Reading Percent Proficient and Advanced by Student Subgroup, Fall 2002 – Fall 2005



Graduation rates among all Wisconsin high school students, as calculated using a common methodology from 1998-99 through 2002-03, remained around 90 percent (Graph D). However, the overall graduation rate for Wisconsin students masks key differences that exist between student subgroups; while 95.22 percent of White students graduated from the class of 2002-03, the comparable rates for non-White student groups were 91.4 percent for Asians, 78.5 percent for American Indians, 76.17 percent for Hispanics, and 62.89 percent for African Americans.¹⁰

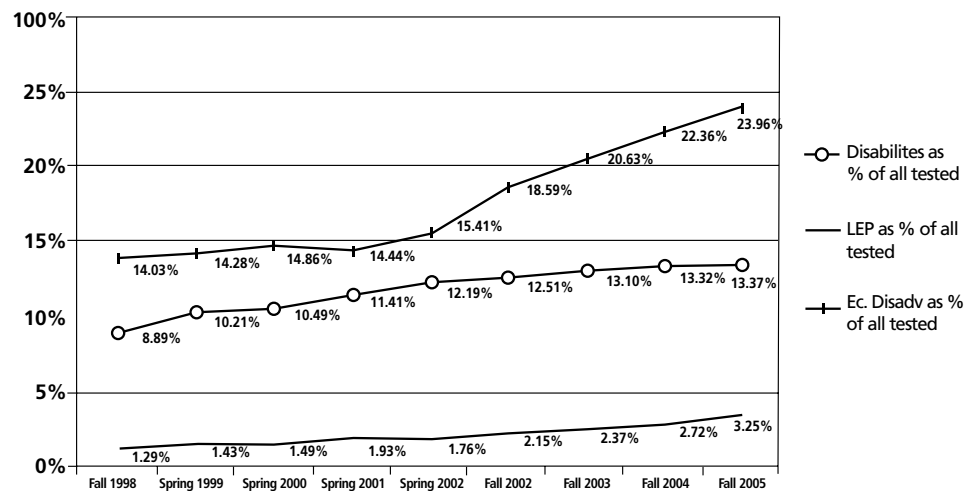
GRAPH D. Graduation Rates (Calculation Methodology Changed for 2003-04)



More Wisconsin students live in poverty than ever before, and high schools serve more students of color, students with disabilities and students with limited-English proficiency.

The demographics of Wisconsin public school students have changed over the past decade in a slow but steady manner. More Wisconsin students live in poverty than ever before, and high schools serve more students of color, students with disabilities and students with limited-English proficiency (Graph E). Economically disadvantaged students comprised 23.96 percent of all grade 10 students tested on the Fall 2005 WKCE, an increase from 14.03 percent on the Fall 1998 WKCE. The percentage of grade 10 students classified as students with disabilities has increased from 8.89 percent in Fall 1998 to 13.37 percent in Fall 2005, and limited-English Proficient students have increased from 1.29 percent of all tested 10th graders in Fall 1998 to 3.25 percent in Fall 2005.¹¹

GRAPH E. Selected Demographic Characteristics of Grade 10 Tested Populations, 1998 – 2005



Proceedings and Work of the Task Force

The work of the High School Task Force was conducted in six face-to-face meetings. Resource materials and recommended readings were provided, and individual members of the Task Force were requested to conduct listening sessions to gather a wide range of input. Twenty-one listening sessions were held throughout the state with sessions facilitated and summarized for reference by all members.

The High School Task Force began with a review of changes in high school experiences over time; an analysis of current and projected workforce and demographic data; and consideration of technological changes and global competitiveness. Resource speakers included David Zach, futurist; Terry Ludeman, labor market expert; and Lynn Allen-Hoffman, UW Professor and CEO of Stratatech, a bio-technology company.

Sessions of the Task Force were devoted to an examination of state, regional, and national level performance measures to gain an understanding of the current status of student academic achievement. National experts in high school redesign efforts were consulted for resource materials and were invited to speak at a Task Force meeting. A recommended reading list is provided in Appendix A, and a complete list of speakers in Appendix B.

The Task Force did not make recommendations specifically related to course or graduation requirements. There are state model academic standards for education quality, minimum credit requirements, and a framework of courses for graduation from a Wisconsin high school. The work focused directly on what it will take to achieve success for all students, regardless of specific course requirements.

At the May 3, 2005, meeting of the Task Force, a panel of students shared its thoughts about high schools. The students emphasized the importance of relationships. Sharing personal experiences, students recounted the effect interactions with adults and positive relationships had on their attendance and participation in school. Equally important was whether students viewed learning as important and meaningful to themselves personally. If they saw little relevance in what they were asked to learn, students frequently expressed minimal motivation. The candor of student testimony and response to Task Force questions was compelling.

Brief reports of innovative practices and new initiatives in high schools across Wisconsin were shared by members over the course of the work of the Task Force. The reports were included both as scheduled agenda topics and interspersed with group discussion. A list of these reports is included in Appendix B.

New Initiatives Reviewed*

Comprehensive Strategies for Adolescent Readers

Bill Fisher, Principal
Boyceville High School

Creating "Smaller" Learning Communities

Kendra Parks, Teacher
Madison Memorial High School

Marty Lexmond, Director
High School Redesign
Milwaukee Public Schools

James Henegar, Teacher
Superior High School

Modified Block Scheduled Prime-Time Usage

Margaret Guertler, Teacher
Berlin Area School District

Project-Based Approach to Integrate International Studies

Tom Evert, District Administrator
Janesville School District

Attendance Transition Program

Gloria Erkins, Principal
Milwaukee Vincent High School

***See description in Appendix B**

Wisconsin has an innovative, nationally-recognized framework for educator licensing known as the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, or PI 34

A panel of experts presented information on educational options, such as youth apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities, alternative education, and programs for students-at-risk. Career and technical education programming in Wisconsin was outlined. National best practices in career academies were presented, along with specific examples from the Green Bay School District and Waukesha South High School.

In 2004, the Office of the Governor, DPI, and the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators received funding from the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to offer training in the principles described in *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform (BR II)*. There are three core areas of BR II: academic rigor, personalization, and collaborative leadership. Three high school principals, Ryan Champeau, Waukesha North High School; Mary Pfeiffer, Stevens Point Area High School; and Larry Haase, Menasha High School, serve as train-the-trainers for BR II. They presented an overview of the core areas and described the experience with implementation of the model at their respective high school.

Wisconsin has an innovative, nationally recognized framework for educator licensing known as the *Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative*, or PI 34, found in Chapter 34, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Administrative Rules.¹² *The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative* was developed by a task force charged with offering recommendations for restructuring education preparation and licensing in Wisconsin. The recommendations describe performance-based standards that outline the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for education professionals.

Several fundamental changes have guided the transition to teacher quality standards found in PI 34. These changes represent paradigm shifts in the licensing process for professional educators in Wisconsin. They are:

- Movement from an input system that focuses on course and credit completion, to an assessment system that emphasizes successful demonstration of the required knowledge, skills, and abilities that ensure proficiency in the ten Educator Standards.
- Movement from a loosely-defined license renewal system to a career-long system of planned professional development based on growth in the Educator Standards.
- Movement from a system of multiple, narrow license categories to a broader, more integrated framework for licensing.

These changes in educator preparation, with an emphasis on performance-based assessment and professional development, aligned with standards, are a good foundation for implementing changes needed to enhance student achievement.

At the October 4, 2005, meeting of the Task Force, keynote speaker Monica R. Martinez, Senior Fellow, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, outlined five common reform strategies. It was understood by the Task Force that the goal was not to endorse one specific model, but that an understanding of the common elements and merits of various strategies was essential. Martinez pointed out that models are useful to bring comprehensive research-based strategies, external expertise, and technical assistance to a school, and to develop an integrated strategy to help all students succeed. In her presentation she outlined the characteristics that distinguish “Obsolete High Schools” from “New Vision High Schools.”¹³

Obsolete High School vs. New Vision High School

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Tracking/differentiated curriculum | • No tracking/core curriculum |
| • Grade levels/seat time | • Multiage/based on student capability and progress |
| • Standardized assessments | • Performance-based assessments |
| • Short and fixed time periods | • Blocked time and flexible scheduling |
| • Acquisition of information out of context | • Acquisition of information is contextual, builds on prior knowledge |
| • Closed classrooms/busy work | • Cooperative learning groups experiential and authentic work |
| • Isolation of students | • Continuous interaction between students and adults |
| • Isolation of teachers | • Team teaching/teacher collaboration |
| • Isolation of institution | • Institution more closely connected to community |
| • Very structured – hierarchical and centralized/authoritarian | • Loosely structured; flat and decentralized, shared responsibility and leadership |

Peggie Klekotka, Program Associate specializing in high school reform with Learning Point Associates and Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory, presented performance data as measured by states in the Midwest region: Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Ohio and Wisconsin. While she cautioned about comparisons due to variations in tests and strategies, she pointed out similarities in achievement gaps in reading and mathematics.

Klekotka highlighted high school redesign models and reform strategies being advanced by several prominent groups, including the American Diploma Project, the National Governors Association, Jobs for the Future, and the National Association for Secondary School Principals. She noted that, while there is some evidence that a number of these reforms are beneficial, there is little high-quality research to document long-term results. Learning Point Associates has produced a document that summarizes research, suggests an action plan for state and district levels, and identifies key resources.

Their summary of research suggests that high schools can be improved by focusing on the following areas:

- **Planning.** Develop and implement high school improvement plans at the state and district levels.
- **Rigor.** Hold students to high standards and expectations, but provide them with the support necessary to succeed in challenging courses.
- **Relevance.** Increase the relevance of the high school curriculum to engage students and allow them to develop career and technical skills.
- **Relationships.** Improve student-teacher and student-student relationships. Create a culture of personalization.
- **Transitions.** Ease the transition to postsecondary educational opportunities and the workforce by integrating college and community partnerships.
- **Data.** Use data to make decisions about curriculum and instruction.¹⁴

Raymond J. McNulty, International Center for Leadership in Education, highlighted similar characteristics of successful schools. He emphasized five trends and punctuated his presentation with several thought-provoking statements that underscore the challenges of comprehensive high school reform.

Trends in High Schools of Today

1. Pressure for accountability in education and closing the achievement gaps will continue to increase.
2. The fundamental challenge is, *“Changing the expectations of educators, parents, community members and students regarding what is possible.”*
3. The growing need for personalization and customization will influence not only the way that business is conducted, but also how schools will function.
4. There has also been a convergence: high school graduates seeking a family-wage job face requirements similar to those entering college.
5. Advances in knowledge about teaching and learning. McNulty referred to “blurring the lines for learning,” and contends, *“The question isn’t whether learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom and school day help students prepare for and engage in life, work, and further learning. The question is why these opportunities are considered beyond or even peripheral to school reform.”*

The National High School Alliance, a partnership of leading national organizations working toward a nationwide commitment to their shared vision of fostering high academic achievement, closing the achievement gap, and promoting civic and personal growth among all high-school-age youth in our high schools and communities, has produced a report, *A Call to Action: Transforming High School for All Youth*. The document is intended to provide leaders at the national, state, district, school and community levels with a common framework to engage a diverse cross-section of stakeholders in the hard work of transforming high schools for all youth.¹⁶

Joe DiMartino, National High School Alliance Steering Committee and Director of the Secondary School Redesign Program at the Education Alliance at Brown University, was a keynote speaker at the October 2005 meeting. DiMartino discussed the six core principles and recommended strategies the Alliance has identified as common in models of systematic approaches to high school reform.

DiMartino also directed the creation of *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform*, a highly acclaimed publication that was a collaborative effort between the Education Alliance and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. A number of Wisconsin high school principals, including High School Task Force Co-Chair Ryan Champeau, were leaders in the development of *Breaking Ranks II*, provided training, and are actively involved in implementation strategies identified in the model.

A Call to Action: Transforming High School for All Youth

Core Principles



National High School Alliance

National High School Alliance

A Call to Action: Transforming High School for All Youth

Core Elements

(Excerpted from the PowerPoint Presentation at the October 4, 2005 High School Task Force Meeting in Milwaukee. Joseph DiMartino, Chair, The National High School Alliance, Washington, DC.)

Personalized Learning Environments

Key Ideas:

- Focus on students
- Culture shift to address link between achievement and engagement; school climate
- High expectations; academic rigor
- Network of adults providing supports, resources
- Smallness as supportive condition, not panacea

Recommended Strategies:

- Identify advocates/advisors for each student and family
- Develop personal learning plans for/with each student
- Work cross-system to address transitions
- Create smaller learning communities
- Build capacity of, and provide opportunities for, student leadership

Academic Engagement of All Students

Key Ideas:

- Access for all students to rigorous, standards-based core academic curriculum
- Relevant, contextualized learning
- Active connections to postsecondary pathways

Recommended Strategies:

- Eliminate general or non-academic courses and tracks
- Differentiate instruction for multiple student populations
- Restructure instructional time
- Connect curriculum to real-world contexts, tapping community, student resources
- Use project-based, inquiry-based learning
- Provide individualized guidance, information, resources to postsecondary pathways

Empowered Educators

Key Ideas:

- Communities of practice as drivers of culture shift to personalized learning environment
- Job-embedded, ongoing professional development to build capacity
- Continuous improvement focused on student achievement
- Collective responsibility for all students

Recommended Strategies:

- Common planning time
- Use of data and research
- Authority to make decisions on practice-related issues
- Capacity to differentiate instruction
- Teacher preparation, induction, retention strategies embedded in communities of practice

Accountable Leaders

Key Ideas:

- Education leaders engage community towards a shared vision
- Define accountability for education leaders at each level of the system
- Resist quick-fix solutions for systemic approach
- Responsible to all youth, including most vulnerable populations

Recommended Strategies:

- Engage stakeholders toward a shared vision
- Allocate resources, ensuring equity for all populations
- Collect data and communicate progress
- Develop strategies for both dropout prevention and recovery
- Support retention of leaders with vision
- Provide structures and supports for distributed leadership and communities of practice

Engaged Community and Youth

Key Ideas:

- School and system leaders need the support and engagement of community stakeholders
- Community stakeholders are responsible for engaging in the process with education leaders

Recommended Strategies:

- Community stakeholders engage with education leaders in articulating shared vision and establishing network of accountability
- Community stakeholders hold themselves and education leaders accountable for specific roles and responsibilities
- Organize and build community and youth capacity for engagement

The core elements presented by the National High School Alliance were used to frame the deliberations of the Task Force as members analyzed performance data and considered strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing high schools.

Integrated System of High Standards, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessments, and Supports

Key Ideas:

- Integrated system critical for transformation
- Provides youth/families clarity of expectations and requirements for postsecondary pathways
- Provides rationale for structures and supports needed to help all students meet high standards

Recommended Strategies:

- Establish clear, rigorous, and aligned standards
- Use multiple measures, including performance-based assessments, aligned with standards
- Plan intended outcomes and assessment strategies first
- Build student capacity to assess progress
- Provide opportunities for acceleration
- Integrate literacy instruction throughout curriculum

The core elements presented by the National High School Alliance were used to frame the deliberations of the Task Force as members analyzed performance data and considered strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing high schools. Input from listening sessions, national trends, various models and strategies, and current innovative practices and reform strategies of high schools in Wisconsin also were considered.



Recommendations

The High School Task Force developed the following set of recommendations to raise achievement, close the gap, and promote postsecondary success and good citizenship for all students. In making the recommendations, it was acknowledged that many schools are already engaged in redesign and improvement efforts. Several best practices and effective practices exist among Wisconsin high schools. Task Force recommendations emphasize the need to share lessons learned and encourage adoption of new models of student engagement, learning, and assessment.

A: Encourage educators and policymakers to move outside of existing structures and pursue innovation.

Embracing the need for change is a top priority in the Task Force recommendations. Innovation, in many dimensions, is an over-arching recommendation. Districts and schools will need flexibility to try new strategies, including instructional delivery modes, class times and structures, and collaborative relationships among all key stakeholders — students, teachers, parents, business, community and higher education partners — to design and implement changes needed to achieve academic success for all students.

Recommended Strategies Include:

- Allow waivers to engage in innovative practices and guarantee sufficient time for individualized approaches to teaching and learning. Provide flexibility to move outside Carnegie units and required minutes of instruction in structuring the school day.
- Encourage collaboration within the entire education community, including schools, colleges, universities, and technical colleges, to design and deliver programs to meet individual student learning needs and expand course offerings.
- Identify effective, research-based strategies to raise student achievement and create a statewide system to promote effective practices.
- Provide professional development for closing the gap in achievement between students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and their peers.
- Fund innovative strategies to increase academic rigor and integration of curriculum at the local level, including creation of new schools, which may include charter schools.
- Advance best practices that promote equity and accountability.

*Task Force
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and assessment.*

B: Give students the opportunity to engage in rigorous, authentic learning experiences that are relevant to their learning needs and future ambitions.

All students need to pursue a rigorous course of study to prepare them for higher education, the workplace, and citizenship. However, not all students learn in the same manner. Rigor comes in many forms, and students deserve options for learning that align with their learning style and needs.

Learning is not measured solely in terms of courses taken. Performance-based assessment is important in validating learning. Students need to be engaged in authentic learning experiences that provide the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. Paper-and-pencil exams, or standardized tests, do not allow all students to demonstrate their full range of learning. Performance-based testing is an important dimension of assessment for many learners.

As multiple instructional and assessment strategies and tools are used, it is important that teachers have opportunities for professional development in order to understand the appropriate uses of various assessment methods. They also must have time to design and implement new instructional and assessment strategies and access data to measure student progress and learning gains.

Contemporary high school models all stress relevancy to learners as an important element in student motivation and dedication to learning. It is important to look for new ways to actively engage students in learning and allow them to learn in ways that are relevant to them and related to their interests and personal goals.

Recommended Strategies Include:

- Ensure that all students have access to a variety of options for learning, including the arts, co-curricular activities, work-based learning, service-learning, and accelerated offerings, to fully engage all types of learners.
- Prioritize adolescent literacy to ensure that students enter high school reading at or above grade level, and address the immediate need to provide funding for literacy programming and staff development at the high school level.
- Examine new models and identify best practices in student learning that are both authentic and relevant, and fully assess the rigor and viability of multiple pathways to academic achievement.
- Promote instructional practice that includes problem-solving and creativity, and prepares students to solve real-world problems and participate as citizens in a diverse and multi-cultural world.
- Provide professional development for educators in the use of multiple assessments, including assessment tools that incorporate hands-on demonstration of knowledge and skills.

- Enhance PK-16 partnerships that foster seamless education to prepare students for success after high school, lifelong learning expectations, and citizenship engagement.
- Expand four-year-old kindergarten and quality early childhood programs, and increase rigor in elementary and middle grades to prepare students for success in high school and beyond.

C: Create smaller, personalized learning environments and require learning and lifelong education plans for individual students.

Large high schools can be impersonal. All high school redesign models emphasize the need for personal connections. Students stressed that a personal connection is a critical element in their motivation to attend school. In large schools, that is not likely to happen without a specific plan to reach each student in a meaningful way. Each student must have at least one adult who has made a positive connection with them and is actively involved in helping the student plan their educational pathway.

Having a learning plan helps students focus on their learning style, goals, and course of action to accomplish those goals. Plans should be developed as students are transitioning to high school and should be reviewed and updated at least annually, including actions that address post-high school plans.

Recommended Strategies Include:

- Provide an adult advocate for each student to establish a meaningful and ongoing relationship.
- Create an individualized learning plan for each high school student that provides guidance and focus throughout the high school experience and includes transition plans to post-high school goals.
- Re-examine compulsory education, with an eye to establishing meaningful learning and/or work-based options for students.
- Create time for educators to work together to seek meaningful ways to integrate content and instruction, and to collaboratively implement strategies needed to achieve success for each individual student.

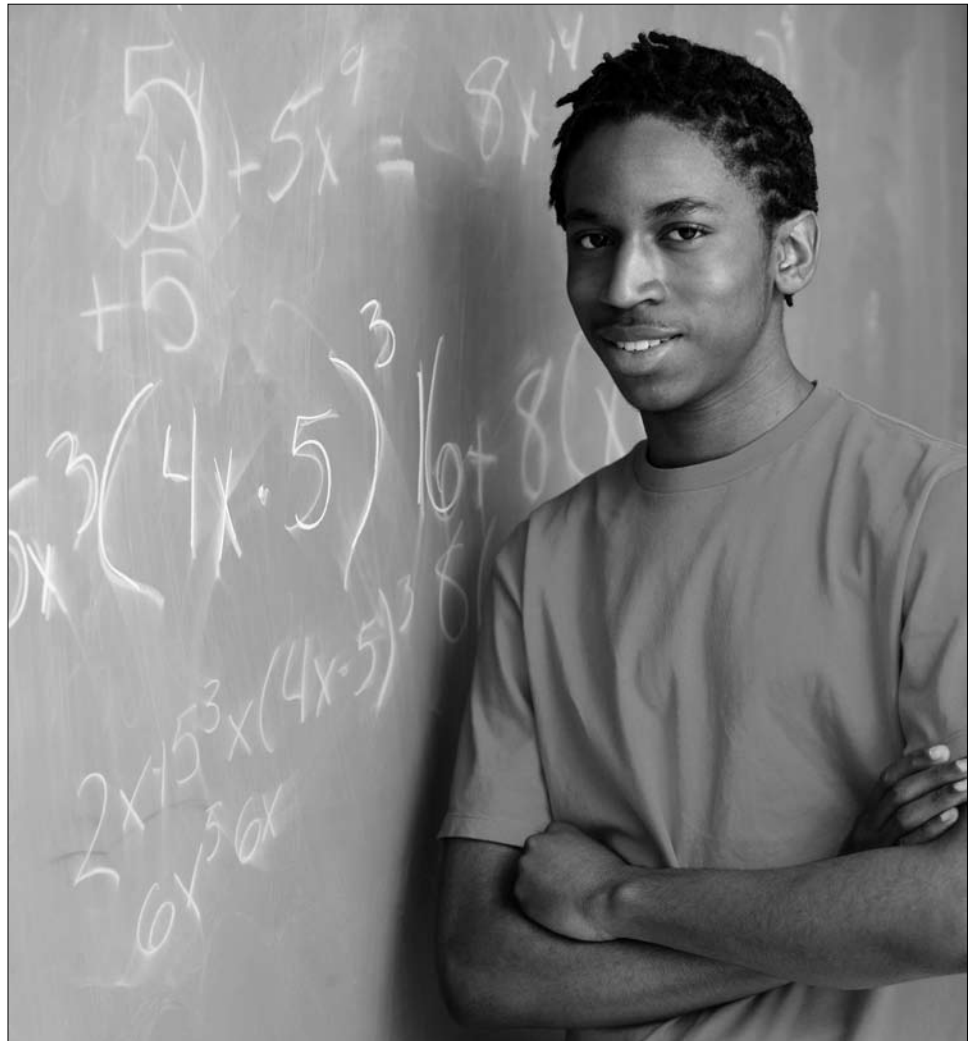
D: Promote and enhance partnerships among schools, parents, businesses, and communities, linking community resources with school programs and curriculum.

Providing educational opportunities and ensuring that all students achieve academic success requires collaboration among students, parents, school personnel, and the community at large, including government and business leaders. Financial resources are limited. Sharing of learning resources, including equipment and work-based learning sites and community resources, is essential to extending learning options and environments to students.

The importance of collaboration goes beyond the need for learning sites and resources. Helping students see the need for education takes a community approach. Schools must be “of the community” – both a resource for community events and a beneficiary of community resources that provide students with opportunities to learn. The leadership of business representatives is especially important to help ensure that learning is relevant and will adequately prepare students for post-high school plans.

Recommended Strategies Include:

- Establish schools as community centers relevant to family, community, and business needs.
- Use collaborative partnerships among schools, businesses, and community-based organizations to ease the strain of funding limitations. Involve business members in classroom activities and students in workplace sites.
- Promote credit-based work experiences, school-business partnerships, and school-to-work opportunities to link grades 9-12 with post-high school education and employer workforce needs.



Conclusion

Wisconsin has always prided itself on a commitment to high-quality, public-supported education. As we work toward fulfilling our *New Wisconsin Promise*...

“In communities across our state, we must have a shared sense of responsibility in addressing the adverse effects of poverty in the education of our children. Schools must build exciting, challenging programs that are creative and diverse in the way we teach children. The classroom of today is not what we had in the past and not what we will have in the future. Now, more than ever, closing the achievement gap must become our No. 1 priority, the economic engine for ensuring long-term security for our state and for our citizens.”

The economic future of our state rests on ensuring our high school students are ready for the workplace, college, and citizenship. A high school education that has meaning for today requires united efforts to actively engage all students in learning and ensure academic achievement and a strong foundation for success. High academic achievement and a rigorous curriculum required for postsecondary education and workforce preparation is of paramount importance. It is equally important that educational options and pathways to success not be limited. One size does not fit all. One instructional method does not suit all learning styles. One educational pathway will not fulfill the “New Wisconsin Promise” and close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and their peers.

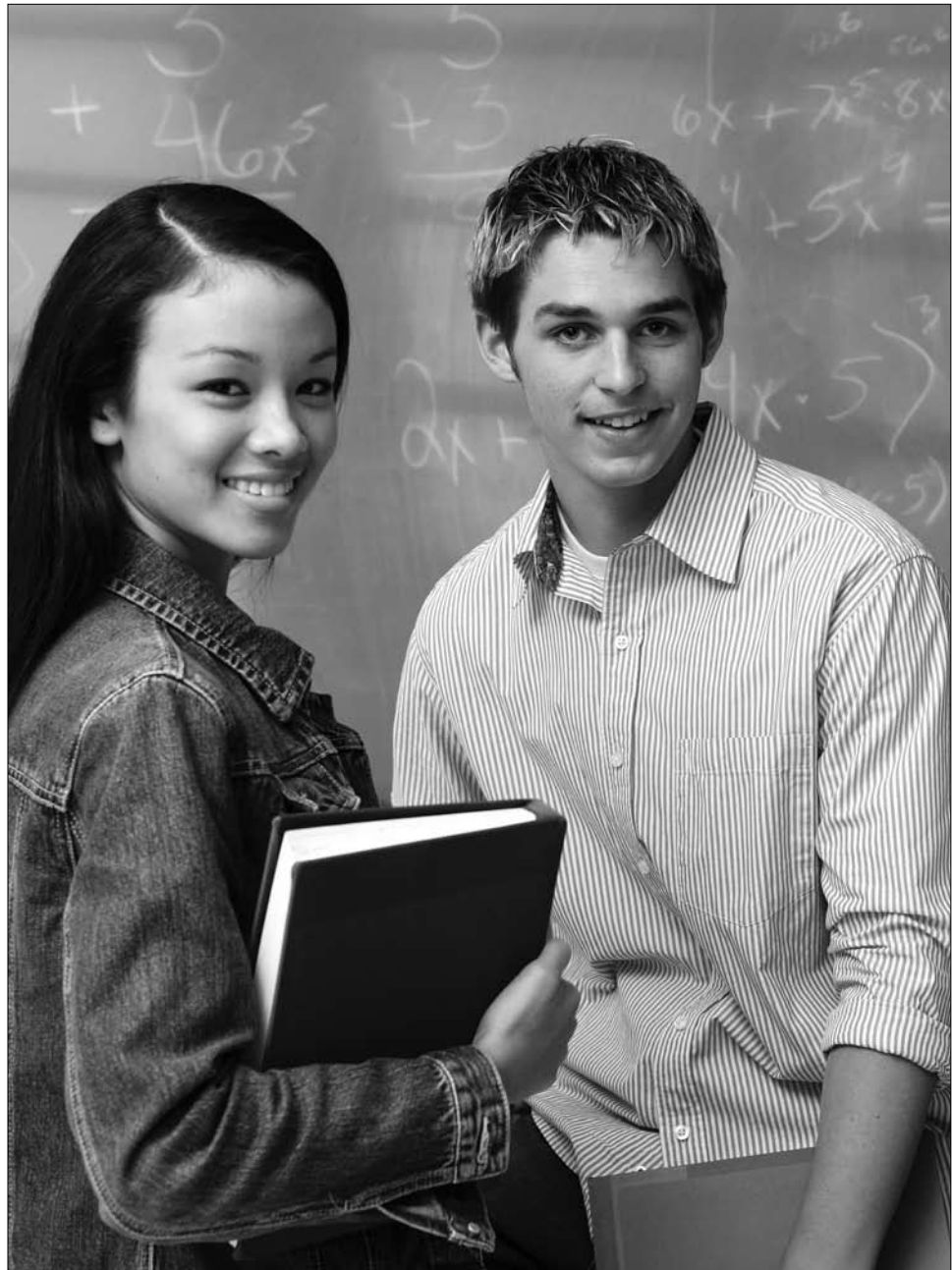
Serious achievement gaps exist, and the preponderance of evidence indicates that the achievement and opportunity gaps will only be closed with determined efforts. Learning to read proficiently is a critical element to be successful in learning throughout life. An assessment of secondary reading achievement in Wisconsin shows that while many students in Wisconsin read quite well as measured by state and national standards, significant achievement gaps persist between student subgroups. These achievement gaps represent one of the biggest challenges facing Wisconsin and the nation.

Recommendations advanced by the High School Task Force call for embracing change. Innovation, in many dimensions, is an over-arching recommendation. Recommendations emphasize the need for rigorous, authentic learning using multiple instructional and assessment strategies; high schools that establish a personal connection for each student; learning plans that help individual students accomplish their goals; and solid business and community partnerships. Strategies related to the recommendations underscore the multi-faceted action that will be needed.

Our tradition of sharing responsibility for education among local, state, and regional entities, requires that extra time and effort must be dedicated to defining desirable outcomes and achieving agreement among multiple constituencies, including school board members, administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders, state and

The classroom of today is not what we had in the past and not what we will have in the future. Now, more than ever, closing the achievement gap must become our number-one priority, the economic engine for ensuring long-term security for our state and for our citizens.

federal legislators, businesses, higher education, and, most importantly, students. Wisconsin has been and must continue to be an innovator in policies, programs and practices to bring improvements to high schools. A variety of programs, including adolescent literacy programs, work-based programs, career academies, alternative education programs, youth options, and collaborative programs to improve attendance are currently addressing high school improvement needs. More needs to be done. The recommendations advanced in this High School Task Force report set an agenda for effective action. We must work together to ensure a high school diploma for the workplace, college, and citizenship.



Appendix A

Recommended Reading List

Research

Adelman, C. (1999). *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment.*

< www.ed.gov/pubs/Toolbox/toolbox.html >

This study looked at a group of students who were in the 10th grade in 1980 and followed them through 1993. Data reviewed included high school and college transcripts, test scores, and surveys. The study clearly demonstrated that students who complete a challenging high school curriculum are better prepared for college. In fact, students who complete a mathematics course beyond Algebra 2 are more than twice as likely to complete a bachelor's degree.

Cotton, K. (2001). *New Small Learning Communities: Findings from Recent Literature.*

< www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/APF03NewSmallLearningCommunities.pdf >

Cotton's review of the research about small learning communities found the following: student achievement was equal to or better than that in larger schools, graduation and attendance rates were higher, student preparation for college was equal to that in larger schools, there were fewer incidences of negative social behavior in small schools, and parents were more involved.

Kemple, J.J., Herlihy, C.M., & Smith, T.J. (2005). *Making Progress Toward Graduation: Evidence from the Talent Development High School Model.*

< www.mdrc.org/publications/408/overview.html >

This report describes the Talent Development model and its implementation in five low-performing high schools in Philadelphia. MDRC utilized strong quasi-experimental methods to evaluate the impact of the program on three cohorts of students. Many Talent Development schools place freshmen in smaller learning communities to ease their transition to high school and to improve their academic preparation. As a result, in Philadelphia, first-time ninth graders achieved substantial gains in attendance, academic course credits and promotion rates as well as modest improvements in attendance during their first year in high school. The improvement in credits earned and promotion rates were sustained as these students progressed through high school. The model also produced improvements in high school graduation rates and mathematics test scores for eleventh graders. Although these schools still have a great deal of room for improvement, the results of this study are encouraging.

Stern, D. & Wing, J. Y. (2004). *Is There Solid Evidence of Positive Effects for High School Students?* < casn.berkeley.edu/resources/solid_evidence.html >

The authors examine three studies that have produced positive impacts for high school students. The research methodology for each study is strong, with each utilizing random assignment. The first program, the Quantum Opportunity Program, significantly increased high school completion rates and resulted in additional positive outcomes. The study of *Upward Bound* found that participants who had not expected to earn bachelor's degrees significantly increased their rate of four-year college attendance. The career academies study revealed that academy students who reported receiving more support while in high school, were more likely to combine academic and technical courses, and were more likely to work in jobs connected to school. Four years after scheduled graduation there was no difference in educational attainment between the control and academy student groups, but there was a significant impact on employment and earnings for academy students. The authors suggest that the rigorous evaluation methods used in these studies also need to be applied to other interventions, such as smaller learning communities, in order to determine their impact on high school students.

Policy and Practice

Achieve Inc. (2004). *The Expectations Gap: A 50-State Review of High School Graduation Requirements.* < [www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/coursetaking/\\$file/coursetaking.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/coursetaking/$file/coursetaking.pdf) >

This report reviews the graduation requirements of all 50 states and concludes that no state requires the courses necessary for success in postsecondary education and work.

Achieve Inc. (2005). *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* < [www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/pollreport/\\$file/pollreport.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/pollreport/$file/pollreport.pdf) >

This study analyzes the results of a December 2004 survey for which public high school graduates, employers, and college instructors were interviewed. Nearly 40 percent of high school graduates noted gaps between the education they received in high school and the skills that they are expected to have in college or the workplace. Moreover, more than 40 percent of college instructors and employers found that students were not prepared for college-level classes or jobs beyond the entry level.

American Diploma Project. (2004). *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts.* < [www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/ADPreport/\\$file/ADPreport.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/ADPreport/$file/ADPreport.pdf) >

This report stresses the importance of high standards to ensure that high school diplomas have value. The authors worked with representatives from higher education and the workforce to determine the skills and knowledge that high school graduates must have to succeed in postsecondary education or the world of work. On the basis of this consensus, the authors created a series of concrete benchmarks that will prepare students for high school graduation and presented them in this user-friendly document. The America Diploma Project urges state policymakers to use these benchmarks to guide the creation of a system of assessments and graduation requirements that will prepare students for college and work.

Balfanz, R. & Legters, N. (2004). *Locating the Dropout Crisis: Which High Schools Produce the Nation's Dropouts? Where Are They Located? Who Attends Them?* < www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/rsch/Locating_Dropouts.pdf >

This report analyzes current issues surrounding the high school dropout problem in the United States. The authors look at the number of freshmen versus the number of seniors four years later to determine what they call “promoting power.” Findings from this analysis include: promoting power in 20 percent of U.S. high schools is weak; overwhelmingly, these high schools have high percentages of minority student populations; and a relatively small number of U.S. cities have the weakest promoting power, which makes it nearly impossible for some students to attend a high school other than one with weak promoting power.

Carnevale, A. & Desrochers, D. (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K–16 Reform.* < www.ets.org/research/dload/standards_for_what.pdf >

This report is based on the authors’ analysis of labor and demographic data. As the baby boomers retire and the information-based economy increases the demand for highly skilled workers, there will be a significant shortage of skilled workers in the future. Thus, the authors argue that it is essential to improve the quality of high school education in order to maintain the economic competitiveness of the United States. State policymakers must align standards and curricula to postsecondary education and labor-market requirements. The curriculum must integrate academic and applied curricula to ensure that students have both a solid academic foundation and well-developed skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal communication.

Cohen, M. (2001). *Transforming the American High School: New Directions for State and Local Policy.* < www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/Transforminghs.pdf >

This report identifies key state and local policy issues related to high school reform. These policy recommendations include the following: focus on the lowest performing schools; invest in capacity building for teachers, principals, and schools; stimulate the creation of new pathways and smaller learning communities; create a system of rigorous standards that are aligned with postsecondary expectations; revamp policies in certification, finance, governance, and other areas; build partnerships to ensure long-term success for all students; and allow time for implementation and evaluation.

Greene, J. & Winters, M. (2005). *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991-2002.* < www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_08.htm >

The authors analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Education to determine the percentage of high school graduates who were prepared for postsecondary education between 1991 and 2002. Their definition of preparation includes three components. First, students must graduate from high school. Second, they must have taken a number of college preparatory courses in high school. Third, they must demonstrate basic literacy skills. Based on the analysis of the data, the authors found that between 1991 and 2002 the percentage of students in public high schools who graduated remained flat, going from 72 percent in 1991 to 71 percent in 2002. However, the percentage of students who were prepared for postsecondary education increased from 25 percent in 1991 to 34 percent in 2002.

Martinez, M. & Bray, J. (2002). *All Over the Map: State Policies to Improve the High School.* < www.hsalliance.org/resources/docs/Allfinal.pdf >

This report reviews state policies to develop a first look that how state policies affect what happens in high schools. The document summarizes the policies into three areas, including those dealing with: (1) course credit, graduation, and diplomas; (2) opportunities to learn, including basic funding and help for students achieving below their peers; and (3) standards, assessments, and accountability.

McNeil, P. W. (2003). *Rethinking High School: The Next Frontier for State Policymakers.* < www.aspeninstitute.org/atf/cf/%7BDEB6F227-659B-4EC8-8F84-8DF23CA704F5%7D/ECSRethinkingHighSc.pdf >

This report describes state policy innovations in high school reform in four states: California, Maine, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The author makes five recommendations for other states. First, states should develop a vision and goals to guide high school reforms efforts. Second, states should review existing policies and regulations and align them with the new vision. Third, states need to identify resources to support reform efforts. Fourth, states should develop a strong technical-assistance component to build capacity and improve instruction. Fifth, states need to give reforms time to develop and monitor the results carefully.

National Association for Secondary School Principals. (2004). *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform.* < www.nassp.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=563&DID=48223 >

The National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has created a practical guide to lead high school principals through a process of needs assessment and a series of action steps to implement 31 recommended high school reforms in three core areas: collaborative leadership and professional learning communities; personalization; and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The authors outline seven strategies that must be addressed to improve educational outcomes for students: core knowledge and skills, connections between students and adults, personalized planning, differentiated curriculum, flexible use of time, distributed leadership, and continuous professional development. The report contains user-friendly tools, references, resources, and a number of school profiles that illustrate the recommended high school reforms in practice.

Redesigning the American High School < www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.751b186f65e10b568a278110501010a0?vgnextoid=2f5c4c33c7732010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=92ebc7df618a2010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD >

This initiative is a joint effort of the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, Achieve, Inc., the National Conference of State Legislatures, and Jobs for the Future. The Web page provides information about the national initiative and about what governors throughout the nation are doing to improve the quality of education in their states.

National High School Alliance (2005). *A Call to Action: Transforming High School for All Youth* < www.hsalliance.org > The National High School Alliance recommends a series of strategies related to six core principles for high school reform: personalized learning environments; academic engagement of all students; empowered educators; accountable leaders; engaged community and youth; and an integrated system of high standards, curriculum, instruction, assessments, and supports.

Pennington, H. (2003). *Accelerating Advancement in School and Work*. < www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/Pennbep.pdf > This publication argues that the transition from high school to college or careers must be radically redesigned to create a system of multiple pathways through which students will master a set of common high standards, but through different types of institutions and in different amounts of time. Policymakers should create a wide range of high-quality educational options that provide a system of supports and interventions to ensure that all students succeed. In order to support these options, policymakers will have to set high standards and clear accountability measures; align funding streams; develop new governance models; build the capacity of teachers; increase the rigor of the curriculum; and strengthen connections between high schools, postsecondary options, and the community.

Pennington, H. (2004). *Fast Track to College: Increasing Postsecondary Success for All Students*. < www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/FastTrack.pdf > This report outlines three options that will create pathways between high school and postsecondary options: college coursework while in high school, technical training programs that high school students can enter, and a gap year in place of the current senior year during which students would work or perform community service. These pathways will require innovative state policies in the following areas: funding mechanisms, performance-based assessments, transferable credits, governance structures, and accountability systems.

Preparing America's Future: High School Leadership Summit Issue Briefs (2003). < www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/issuepapers.html > This series of papers was written by a group of national education experts at the invitation of the U.S. Secretary of Education as part of the High School Leadership Summit held in October 2003. Using the framework of No Child Left Behind, these papers articulate the challenges facing high schools and suggest directions for state and local education leaders. Among the topics addressed in this series are high expectations, accountability and assessment, turning around low-performing schools, adolescent literacy, and transitions to college.

Southern Governors' Association. (2004). *New Traditions: Options for Rural High School Excellence*. < www.southerngovernors.org/indexPDF/SGANewTraditions.pdf >

This report is based on the results of visits to successful high school programs by nine representatives of the Southern Governors' Association. Based on what was learned, the organization advocates setting up statewide commissions on high school improvement and recommends states focus on the dropout issue, support development of principals, improve professionalism among teachers, and use alternative methods of assessment.

State and District High School Reform Plans

Boston, Massachusetts: *Focus on High Schools* (2001) < highschoolrenewal.org/carnegieproposal.pdf >

California: *California: Aiming high: High schools for the 21st century* (2004) < www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/ahgen.asp >

Iowa: *Foundation for change: Focusing on Iowa high schools* (2002) < www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/fohs/ >

Maine: *Promising futures: A call to improve learning for Maine's secondary students* (1998) < mainegov-images.informe.org/education/cse/promisin.pdf >

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: *The Blueprint for Milwaukee's New Vision High Schools* (2003) < www.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/fileBroker.php/10882/MPS-New-Vision-HS.pdf >

Ohio: *Task force report: High-quality high schools: Preparing all students for success in postsecondary education, careers, and citizenship* (2004) < www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement_gaps/Task_Force_on_Quality_High_Schools_for_a_Lifetime_of_Opportunities/Default.asp >

Rhode Island: *Strategies for transforming Rhode Island high schools* (2000) < www.ridoe.net/HighSchoolReform/PDFs/HIGH%20school%20reform/HS_Summit.pdf >

Learning Point Associates Resources

Beyond High School: Improving Transition Programs for Postsecondary Education: < www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/html/pivol18 >

The most recent *Policy Issue* from Learning Point Associates focuses on how practitioners and policymakers can help students improve the transition from high school to a variety of postsecondary educational options. This issue reviews a number of transition programs and highlights policy recommendations in the areas of student preparation, funding, and governance.

Center for High School Excellence Web site < www.chse.org >

This Web site acts as a portal to: information on existing high school research; high school policies at the federal and state levels; resources that move research into strategies for action; and services specific to high schools from Learning Point Associates. Under the "Search Improvement Topics" section of the site, choose "Transitions to Work" from the dropdown menu.

Quick Key 9 Action Guide - Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act: Strategies to Improve High Schools < www.chse.org/qkey9/index.php >

This *Quick Key* from Learning Point Associates examines the challenges educators are facing to improve the quality of education in high schools. This timely resource includes information on high school research, planning for improvement, using data, and funding. It also provides a list of national organizations focused on high school improvement. See the “Increasing Relevance” section.

International Center for Leadership in Education

The Center website < www.leadered.com >

This site provides a host of research materials related school redesign. The Center recently convened a *High School Reinvention Symposium*; and hosts an annual *Model Schools Conference* each summer.

Latest White Papers include:

- *Preparing Students for Their Future*, by Willard R. Dagget. This paper, presented at the 2005 Model Schools Conference, describes four major trends – globalization, changing demographics, technology, and changing values and attitudes – that must be addressed to assure that students are prepared to meet the challenges of the future.
- *Successful Schools: From Research to Action Plans*, by Willard R. Dagget. School districts are seeking innovative ways to give technical assistance to teachers. The International Center specializes in providing the data and methods necessary to offer all students a rigorous and relevant education, as described in this 2005 Models Schools Conference paper.

The Successful Practices Network < www.successfulpractices.org >

Raymond J. McNulty, Executive Director. The Network, sponsored by the International Center for Leadership in Education, is a not-for-profit membership organization designed for good schools that want to become even better. The Network provides a mechanism to share data, experiences, technical assistance, research, and best practices with one another.

Appendix B

Speaker/Panel Presentation Narrative (in chronological order)

History Gram – High School Days of the Past

What are the Knowledge and Skills that Endure the Test of Time?

Lessons Learned from High School

Pat Alea, Alea & Associates

Instructor, UW-Madison Small Business Center

Madison, Wisconsin

A Futurist Goes Back to School

David Zach, Futurist, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

What Does Wisconsin's Future Hold? – A Look at Demographics

Terry Ludeman (Retired), Former Chief

Office of Economic Advisors

Department of Workforce Development

Madison, Wisconsin

Shouldn't They Have Learned This in Elementary School?

The Need for Reading in Secondary Schools

William Fisher, Principal, Boyceville High School

Boyceville, Wisconsin

Three years ago, Boyceville High School developed the goal that all high school students would graduate with the ability to read at grade level. The plan to meet that goal is three-fold. First, teacher in-service time is used to improve the understanding in all teachers of the specific problems that struggling readers face and to give teachers a common language to further discuss these problems with students and colleagues. To facilitate this awareness, all faculty members have read Chris Tovani's *I Read It, but I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers*.

Second, Renaissance Learning's STAR Reading computer-adaptive reading test is used to quickly and reliably assess and monitor students' ability levels. The results of the test help determine which students require reading instruction. Third, struggling readers are assigned a reading class that focuses on teaching reading strategies. Many of the students in these classes experience success in reading for the first time in their lives. This achievement has fostered much needed self-confidence and positive changes in behavior.

Breaking Ranks II Overview

Ryan Champeau, Principal, Waukesha North High School
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Mary Pfeiffer, [then] Principal, Stevens Point Area High School
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Larry Haase, Principal, Menasha High School
Menasha, Wisconsin

In 2004, the Office of the Governor, DPI and the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA) received funding from the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to offer training around *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform (BR II)*. There are three core areas of *BR II*: academic rigor, personalization and collaborative leadership. Three high school principals, Ryan Champeau, Waukesha North High School; Mary Pfeiffer, [then] Stevens Point Area High School; and Larry Haase, Menasha High School; serve as train-the-trainers for *BR II* and presented an overview of the core areas and experience with implementation of the model at their respective high school.

Smaller Learning Communities

James Henegar, Teacher
Superior High School
Superior, Wisconsin

With the advent of *No Child Left Behind 2001*, it is imperative that schools reach specific success rates or face repercussions. Studies show that larger schools (1000+) have certain drawbacks that can be successfully countered by the Smaller Learning Community (SLC) initiatives. Change the format not the building. Superior High School, faced with the same issues, decided to move forward with SLC and has found that students, staff, and the community have responded positively. “Where relationships lead to success” has been more than a slogan with the results we have seen.

Over the last six years Superior High School has been a school in transition, working to implement its smaller learning community plan. Personalization, teacher collaboration, and connecting the curriculum to meaningful, real-world experiences for students have been the focus of our efforts. Students in grades 9 and 10 are supported through academic “teaming,” while juniors and seniors are connected with a teacher advisor and community mentor to complete their senior project, a newly adopted graduation requirement for all seniors beginning with the class of 2006. Teachers are also working daily on collaborative teams. A comprehensive career plan has been implemented to assist students in planning their yearly high school course schedules. Working closely with both the local university and vocational/technological school has supported students in connecting the daily lesson with real world expectations and experiences. This focus begins in 9th grade through a required transition class called “Keystone” and culminates with each student presenting his/her senior project in front of a school and community evaluation panel. Finally, to support all of these initiatives, we changed our school day to include a 40-minute “common planning time” at the beginning of each day. Both teachers and students have found this time to be invaluable. It’s certainly easy to see how “Where Relationships Lead to Success” has become Superior High School’s vision statement.

The Attendance Transition Program

Gloria Erkins, Principal
Milwaukee Vincent High School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Students who are habitually truant from school are likely to drop out of school, ending their high school academic career. These students are not engaged academically. The School Social Worker or the District Attorney finds them and forces them back to school. They return to school further behind, more frustrated, and even less likely to find success.

The Attendance Transition Program is designed and structured to meet the needs of unsuccessful students and to facilitate connections to supportive adults. The goals of this program are to create a school environment that connects students who are having difficulties with caring adults; meet students' academic, employment, social and personal needs; and provide students with the opportunity to successfully transition to the regular high school program. Much of instruction is interdisciplinary, using a hands-on approach. The *Plato Learning Program* is also used as an instructional tool.

The Neighborhood System at James Madison Memorial High School

Kendra Parks, Teacher
Madison Memorial High School
Madison, Wisconsin

The Memorial High School Neighborhood System, under the leadership of Principal Dr. Pamela Nash, is an innovative program designed to take a large metropolitan high school and make it "smaller," so that all students can feel connected, supported and successful. Memorial High School received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of creating the neighborhood system. This system, started during the 2000-01 academic year, was created to close the race-based and class-based achievement gap, create a cohesive school culture, build student leadership, and increase and diversify student participation in extracurricular activities.

The entire school was restructured from divisions along grade levels into four neighborhoods of approximately 500 students and 25 faculty members, with smaller divisions within each neighborhood, the smallest being backyards. The goals of the neighborhood system, methods of student and staff assignment, and the networking of backyards to community organizations for service initiatives all promote service-learning, leadership and inclusion for all Memorial students, while maintaining the high academic standards for students for which Memorial is known.

Discovery, Technology Transfer, and Implementation: Life-Saving Linkages

Lynn Allen-Hoffman, CEO, Stratatech

Department of Natural Resources-Environmental Toxicology, Pathology & Laboratory
Medicine in the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences and Medical School
Madison, Wisconsin

Janesville Craig and Parker High Schools – International Charter School

Tom Evert, District Administrator

Janesville School District

Janesville, Wisconsin

The School District of Janesville opened the Janesville Academy for International Studies second semester of the 2004-2005 school year. Students who are interested in international studies, business and/or world languages are pursuing a rigorous alternative to traditional coursework.

For two or three hours a day, students work individually or in a cohort group to fulfill requirements connected with an in-depth research project on a historic or contemporary global issue or problem. Each student works with a mentor who provides direction and expertise in real life learning.

Students also learn from a variety of guest speakers who present information on various world regions and address issues of international business and culture. The semester culminates with project presentations given to a panel of jurors who critique the merits of research, findings and observations.

Berlin High School – Modified Block Schedule Prime Time Usage

Margaret Guertler, Teacher

Berlin High School

Berlin, Wisconsin

Berlin High School employs a modified block schedule consisting of five 70-minute periods with a 30-minute “PrimeTime” at the end of the day. The 30-minute block is used for everything from remediation to extra-curricular activities. Any student whose grades are deficient (less than C-) is assigned to PrimeTime. After a two-week period at the end-of-the-day block, if the student has raised his/her grade, he/she is released.

Other activities consist of club meetings, help with current assignments, make-up for work missed due to absences, and other similar activities.

Federal Drive for Accountability

Mike Thompson, Executive Assistant
Office of the State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

Thompson outlined the requirements for testing and assessing adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The PowerPoint presentation may be accessed at < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

How Do We Look in Wisconsin?

Brad Carl, Consultant for Statistics and Assessment
Office of Educational Accountability
Division for Reading and Student Achievement
Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

Carl provided an overview of assessment and graduation data for Wisconsin high school students at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The PowerPoint presentation may be accessed at < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

The Regional Perspective

Peggie Klekotka, Program Associate
Policy and Networks
Learning Point Associates
Naperville, Illinois

Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The PowerPoint presentation may be accessed at < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

High School Reform Models that Support Student Achievement

Monica Martinez, Senior Fellow
KnowledgeWorks Foundation
Cincinnati, Ohio

Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The PowerPoint presentation may be accessed at < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

National High School Alliance: Six Principles

Joe DiMartino, Director
Secondary School Redesign Program at the Education Alliance, Brown University
National High School Alliance Steering Committee
Providence, Rhode Island

Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The PowerPoint presentation may be accessed at < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

Milwaukee High School Redesign Efforts

Marty Lexmond, Director
High School Redesign, Milwaukee Public Schools
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The presentation focused on the development of a portfolio of new high school models that will move Milwaukee from the concept of one type of high school for all types of students, to different types of high school for different types of students. The portfolio of high schools will include up to forty new, small mission-driven high schools, as well as large high schools organized into small learning communities. Milwaukee will also continue to have several large, comprehensive high schools within the diverse portfolio. All of the high schools focus on the new 3-R's – Relationships, Relevance, and Rigor.

Lessons Learned in High School Re-Invention

Ray McNulty, Executive Director
Successful Practices Network
International Center for Leadership in Education

Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The PowerPoint presentation may be accessed at < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

Educator Preparation Programs and Educator Licensing and Professional Development

Judy Peppard, Director
Teacher Education, Professional Development, and Licensing
Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

Ms. Peppard provided a synopsis of the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative: Restructuring educator preparation and licensing. She defined educator licensing stages and education preparation program approval standards. For further information, visit the DPI Teacher Education, Professional Development and Licensing website at < <http://dpi.wi.gov/tepd/watsnew.html> >

Panel on Educational Options

Joyce Christee, Director
Youth Apprenticeship
Department of Workforce Development
Madison, Wisconsin

Ms. Christee dispelled myths and presented facts on youth apprenticeship participation. She highlighted two recent follow-up studies of youth apprenticeship graduates. Results showed that: 78 percent enrolled in postsecondary education (46 percent in technical colleges; 53 percent in a college or university); youth apprenticeship graduates entering technical colleges are three times more likely to complete an associate degree than other high school students; and that retention rates for youth apprenticeship grads in the UW system and WTCS after two years exceeds that of other high school students.

Margaret Ellibee, Director
Career and Technical Education
Department of Public Instruction

Dr. Ellibee outlined work-based learning opportunities involving local business, industry and labor that help students to see how academic and technical skills come to life in dynamic work settings. Options highlighted included: Wisconsin Cooperative Education Skill Standards Certificate Programs, Internships, Job Shadowing, Service Learning, Career Academies, School-based Enterprise and Career Clusters-Pathways and Tech Prep.

Steve Hartley, Director of Alternative Programs
Madison Metropolitan School District

Hartley outlined the alternative programs available in Madison Public Schools, discussed parameters for participation, student interest, and characteristics of participants. The Alternative Educational System is designed to give a wider range of high quality educational options to students. These alternatives provide a continuum of choices that allow students to develop skills and successfully transition to their next learning environment, whether that is a regular education classroom, another alternative, a post secondary program, or the adult working world. Alternative Education Programs play a key role in meeting the goal of 100 percent graduation of all students.

Beth Lewis, School Administration Consultant
Career and Technical Education
Department of Public Instruction

Ms. Lewis defined “children at risk” as stated in Wisconsin Statutes and provided an overview of educational options available at the local level to serve at-risk students. Her presentation also included information on alternative education programming and youth options.

Panel – Academy Approach – What Makes Them Meaningful?

Career Academies in Green Bay Schools

Mary Pfeiffer, Executive Director of Instruction
Green Bay Area Public School District
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Career academies have played a significant role in the development of students in the Green Bay Area School District. Currently, students have an opportunity to select one of four academies including Computer & Information Technology, Engineering & Manufacturing, Health Services, and International Business.

An academy is an instructional approach that includes ways to integrate learning for high school students and allows for students to schedule course selection based on potential career interests. This approach allows for additional program choices for students, while still maintaining a comprehensive high school.

Academies prepare students for postsecondary opportunities of their choice, whether it is a four year university, a two year technical college, or post-high school employment. Academy courses are career specific, may save time and money, as well as possibly allowing students to earn dual credit at Wisconsin Technical Colleges and universities. Academies are also an excellent means of preparing for working in the “real world.”

Dr. Allen Phelps, Director
Center on Education and Work
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin

Dr. Phelps provided an overview of the current evidence describing the implementation and effects of career academies. First established in 1969 in Philadelphia as a dropout prevention program, career academies are found in approximately 2,500 (about 24 percent) of the nation’s high schools. Relatively few high schools in Wisconsin have been organized with academies, although the number has increased in recent years. Career academies can be implemented successfully as a small school or school within a school strategy if the vision, goals, resources, implementation plan, and stakeholder commitment reflect the standards of practice identified by the National Career Academy Coalition. Research suggests that successful implementation of career academies in a local context is highly dependent on a clear commitment to and a shared understanding of: (a) the students to be served and their academic needs, (b) economic and workforce development priorities and goals, and (c) the outcome indicators to be used to measure progress in meeting student and economic development needs. Dr. Phelps’ comments were presented to the Task Force in a short briefing paper titled, *Career Academies: Lessons for High School Redesign in Wisconsin*.

Linda Farina, Director
Family and Consumer Sciences
Waukesha South High School
Waukesha, Wisconsin

Linda Farina, Veteran High School Teacher, Health Occupations Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator and Director of the Waukesha Academy of Health Professions, shared the “Why” and “What” it takes to implement a Health Academy. Linda was directly involved with the development of the Academy and charter school concept and writing of the planning and implementation grant. Her presentation included a video clip of students engaged in learning.

The Waukesha Academy of Health Professions opened its doors in September 1st, 2004 to 50 students living in Waukesha County who wished to pursue a career in a health care field. The Academy has experienced overwhelming support from their community and eighty-six community partners. A 30-minute documentary was recently created by the School District of Waukesha which profiles the success of their charter school, which is a school within a school at Waukesha South High School. The Health Academy enrollment will increase to 130 students for the 2006-2007 School Year.

The Health Academy has achieved the goal of including at least 17 percent racial diversity within the school population. At the present time 27 percent of the student population is of diverse racial background and bilingual. The Academy has made strong efforts to maintain expectations which include maintaining 97 percent attendance, 3.0 grade point average and service learning requirements of 25 hours per year. At the present time the average grade point average of Academy students is 3.23. The Academy has implemented a Pyramid of Intervention, which includes after school tutoring for all students not achieving this GPA. Other successes include a mentoring program, innovative curriculum and student exposure to the health care industry. The Waukesha Academy of Health Professions continues to celebrate the strategic partnerships they have developed, the success of their first two years of implementation and student success.

Student Panel – High School Reform from their Perspective

Kris Benusa, River Valley High School, Spring Green

Jordan Bronston, Onalaska High School, Onalaska

Dan Finn, Waukesha North High School, Waukesha

William Garland, Rufus King High School, Milwaukee

Kristin Hood, Neenah High School, Neenah

Nate Jameson, Onalaska High School, Onalaska

Lindsey Kraemer, River Valley High School, Spring Green

Hlee Lor, Stevens Point Area High School, Stevens Point

Xavier Marquez, Horlick High School, Racine

Jennifer Rhodes, Custer High School, Milwaukee

Alison Ringhand, Rufus King High School, Milwaukee

Rachel Robertson, Neenah High School, Neenah

Jenni Todd, Stevens Point Area High School, Stevens Point

Laron Wilder, Vincent High School, Milwaukee

Kevin Windischman, Vincent High School, Milwaukee

Lisa Wonder, Waukesha North High School, Waukesha

Endnotes

¹ ACT High School Profile Report: The Graduating Class of 2006, Wisconsin, p. 7.

² Ibid, p. 8.

³ Achieve Data Profile: Wisconsin, April 2006, PowerPoint p. 26, < <http://www.achieve.org/node/518> >

⁴ Ibid, p. 27.

⁵ Ibid, p. 28.

⁶ State Integrated Summary, 2004-2005, Wisconsin – Public Schools, State Reports, College Board, August 2005, p. 18.

⁷ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINNS) website, < <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/performance.asp> >

⁸ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINNS) website, < <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/graphshell.asp?GRAPHFILE=GEDISA> >

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINNS) website, < <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/graphshell.asp?GRAPHFILE=HIGHSCHOOLCOMPLETION> >

¹¹ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINNS) website, < <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/selschool.asp> >

¹² Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Teacher Education, Professional Development and Licensing website < <http://dpi.wi.gov/tepd/watsnew.html> >

¹³ *High School Reform Models that Support Student Achievement*, Monica Martinez, Senior Fellow, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Cincinnati, Ohio. Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

¹⁴ *The Regional Perspective*, Peggy Klekotka, Program Associate, Policy and Networks, Learning Point Associates, Naperville, Illinois. Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

¹⁵ *Lessons Learned in High School Re-Invention*, Ray McNulty, Executive Director, Successful Practices Network, International Center for Leadership in Education. Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

¹⁶ *National High School Alliance: Six Principles*, Joe DiMartino, Director, Secondary School Redesign Program at the Education Alliance, Brown University, National High School, Alliance Steering Committee, Providence, Rhode Island. Presented at the State Superintendent's High School Task Force Meeting, October 4, 2005, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, < <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/hstask.html> >

